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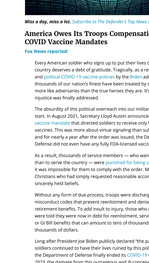
America Owes Its Troops Compensation for Unfair COVID Vaccine Mandates + More

The Defender's Big Brother NewsWatch brings you the latest headlines related to governments' abuse of power, including attacks on democracy, civil liberties and use of mass surveillance. The views expressed in the excerpt, from other news sources do not necessarily reflect the views of The Defender.

By The Defender Staff



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America Owes Its Troops Compensation for Unfair COVID Vaccine Mandates

Fox News reported:

Every American soldier who signs up to put their lives on the line for our country deserves a debt of gratitude. Tragically, as a result of deeply unfair and politicized COVID-19 vaccine policies by the Biden administration, tens of thousands of our nation's finest have been treated by our government more like adversaries than the true heroes they are. It's time this grievous injustice was finally addressed.

The absurdity of this political overreach into our military was clear from the start. In August 2021, Secretary Lloyd Austin announced a COVID-19 vaccine mandate that directed soldiers to receive only fully FDA-licensed vaccines. This was more about virtue signaling than public assistance. At that time and for nearly a year after the order was issued, the Department of Defense did not deem these vaccines fully licensed.

As a result, thousands of service members — who wanted nothing more than to serve their country — were punished for being unvaccinated. Some were discharged, others were forced to comply with the order. Many were devout Christians who had simply requested reasonable accommodation for their sincerely held beliefs.

Without any form of due process, troops were discharged with severe misconduct codes that prevent veterans from receiving full medical and retirement benefits. To add insult to injury, those who were discharged were told they were now in debt for reenlistment, service academy tuition, or GI Bill benefits that can amount to tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Long after President Joe Biden publicly declared "the pandemic is over," soldiers continued to have their lives ruined by this policy. And even after the Department of Defense finally ended its COVID-19 vaccine mandate in 2023, the damage from this outrageous and ill-conceived policy did not end there. Tens of thousands of healthy soldiers remained separated from the military.

ABC to Face Trial Over 'General Hospital' Firings Tied to COVID Vaccine Mandates

The Hollywood Reporter reported:

ABC must face religious discrimination claims from two former General Hospital crewmembers who sued the network after they were fired for refusing the COVID-19 vaccination, making one of the first rulings to clear the way for trial over terminations caused by Hollywood vaccine mandates widely imposed by studios amid the pandemic.

A Los Angeles judge, in an order issued Tuesday, found that James and Timothy Watt may have had "sincerely held" religious beliefs that ABC should have accommodated by affording them exemptions and allowing them to follow safety protocols implemented before mandatory vaccination policies were rolled out.

The ruling comes on the heels of ABC defeating a similar lawsuit from Ingo Rademacher over his dismissal from General Hospital for refusing to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Unlike with crewmembers who were not in close, unmasked contact with others, the court found in that case that it was impossible for unvaccinated actors to safely work on set during the pandemic due to the nature of their work.

Meta's Zuckerberg Seeks out of Lawsuits Blaming Him for Instagram Addiction

Bloomberg reported:

Mark Zuckerberg is seeking to avoid being held personally liable in two dozen lawsuits accusing Meta Platforms Inc. and other social media companies of addicting children to their products.

The Meta chief executive officer is set to make his case at a hearing Friday in California federal court. A ruling in Zuckerberg's favor would dismiss him as a personal defendant in the litigation with no impact on the allegations against Meta.

Holding him personally responsible may be a challenge because of a corporate law tradition of shielding executives from liability, especially at larger companies where decision-making is often layered. A victory against the billionaire who launched Facebook with friends as a Harvard undergraduate two decades ago could encourage claims against other CEOs in matters without injury litigation.

Zuckerberg faces allegations from young people and parents that he was repeatedly warned that Instagram and Facebook weren't safe for children but ignored the findings and publicly stated the opposite was true. Plaintiffs contend that as the face of Meta, Zuckerberg has a responsibility to "speak fully and truthfully on the risks Meta's platforms pose to children's health."

Instagram and Facebook Knowingly Platform Parents Who Sexually Exploit Children for Profit, Say Reports

The Verge reported:

Investigations into "child influencer" accounts on Facebook and Instagram have found that Meta is knowingly platforming parents who sexualize their children, and in some cases, using Meta's paid subscription tools to do so.

According to separate reports published by The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal on Thursday, Facebook and Instagram have become a potentially lucrative endeavor for parents who run social media accounts for children — mostly girls — who aren't old enough to meet the platforms' minimum 13-year-old age requirement.

Several of the "parent-managed minor accounts" investigated sold materials to their large audiences of adult men, including photos of their children in revealing attires, exclusive chat sessions, and in-person meetups, used leotards and cheer outfits.

The Times also reported the company's inadequate moderation attempts, noting that Meta responded to just one of the 50 reports the publication made regarding questionable content featuring children over a period of eight months. One internal study conducted by Meta in 2020 and revealed in court documents found that 500,000 child Instagram accounts had "inappropriate" interactions every day.

Nova Scotia Health to Lift COVID Immunization Requirement for Employees

CBC News reported:

Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health are set to lift a requirement for employees, patient-facing caregivers and on-site medical staff to submit proof of primary series COVID-19 immunization beginning Feb. 26, 2024.

In an email to CBC News on Wednesday night, a spokesperson for Nova Scotia Health said the decision was made "in response to evolving evidence regarding COVID-19, Omicron sub-variants, protection from vaccine and a review of vaccination policies across other jurisdictions."

NSH confirmed the change in policy after a letter to an employee was posted on social media earlier in the day. The letter advises the employee, on unpaid leave for not meeting the COVID-19 immunization requirements, that they could return to work as of Monday.

The letter goes on to direct the employee to notify their manager of their intent to return or resign by March 15.

Phone Swipe Sounds Can Capture Fingerprints, U.S.-China Research Shows

Newsweek reported:

A team of American and Chinese researchers claims to have found a way to exploit a vulnerability in a widely used biometric authentication method used to secure smartphones. The researchers say their study is the first to use the sound of a user's swipe to infer their fingerprint and that it "rings the alarm bells" over personal, and even national security.

In the wrong hands, such technology could threaten a wide range of people without their knowledge.

The finger movements of online gamers, for example, could be detected via microphones as they interact with other players. Users of social media platforms like Facebook or China's WeChat are also at risk of having their fingerprint patterns collected and harvested.

Biometrics like finger scans and facial recognition are widely trusted as means of securing mobile devices. A forecast released last April by Acumen Research predicted the fingerprint identification market would skyrocket from $12.7 billion in 2022 to nearly $100 billion by 2032.

Facebook Whistleblower, AI Godfather Join Hundreds Calling for Deepfake Regulation

The Hill reported:

Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen, former Democratic presidential candidate Andrew Yang and one of the "godfathers" of artificial intelligence (AI), Yoshua Bengio, were among hundreds who signed an open letter Wednesday calling for deepfake regulation.

More than 400 AI experts, artists and politicians signed the letter, which urged governments to pass laws criminalizing deepfake child pornography and establishing criminal penalties for those who knowingly create or facilitate the spread of harmful deepfakes.

The letter also suggested software developers be held responsible and required to prevent their products from creating harmful deepfakes and be held liable if their measures are too easily circumvented.

Deepfakes — which the letter describes as "non-consensual and grossly misleading AI-generated voices, images or videos, that a reasonable person would mistake as real" — pose growing risks as AI technology has become more widely available.

Florida Passes Strict Social Media Restrictions for Minors Despite DeSantis' Misgivings

Politico reported:

The Florida Republican-led House overwhelmingly passed legislation Thursday to trace the strictest social media prohibitions in the country by cutting off anyone under 16 years old from many platforms despite some objections from Gov. Ron DeSantis.

House members voted on the bill mere hours after it was backed by the Senate in a surprise move that procedurally could force DeSantis to act sooner on legislation that he has been skeptical of for weeks. Because the legislature passed the bill, SS HB1 (24B), with two-thirds majorities in session, DeSantis would have to either sign or veto the measure before lawmakers leave Tallahassee.

The Republican governor has raised particular concerns about the legislation not giving parents a say in whether their children should be allowed on social media. But lawmakers were unwilling to add a carve-out to the bill that could allow some minors to access social media despite the threat of DeSantis' possible veto.

Florida's legislation would require some social media platforms to prohibit anyone younger than 16 from creating an account and mandate that they use a third party for age verification services. While other states have implemented similar ideas, Florida goes further by not giving parents an opportunity to allow their children to bypass the potential law.

The Big Tech Show: Are We Sleepwalking Into Mass Surveillance? Garda Bodycams and Facial Recognition Technology

Irish Independent reported:

Are we rushing the introduction of garda bodycams and facial recognition technology? How will they work? And is there a danger that they might profile us? On this week's episode of The Big Tech Show, Adrian chatted with practising criminal defence barrister and vice-chair of the Justice Committee, Fine Gael Senator Barry Ward.

Adrian began by asking if facial recognition technology would lead to a dystopian society or if it would be useful in prosecuting crime. Senator Ward highlighted that facial recognition technology is already in use in Ireland but may not be used in law enforcement.

The technology is currently in use with passport biometrics and used by the Department of Social Protection in Ireland. The politician made the point that this is not something new and is commonplace in a number of new system.

Gardaí expects the trial of body cameras, limited to a handful of garda stations in Dublin, Limerick and Waterford, to proceed by the summer.

Chinese Filmmaker Charged Over Documentary About COVID 'White Paper' Protests

Hong Kong Free Press reported:

A mainland Chinese filmmaker has been charged with "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" over a documentary about the rare nationwide protests against the government's strict COVID-19 restrictions in late 2022.

Chen Pinlin, known by the pseudonym Plato, was arrested in Shanghai on January 5 after releasing a film on the "white paper movement" to mark one year since the protests, Chinese human rights group Civil Rights and Livelihood Watch said. The movement was named for the blank sheets of paper — a symbol of censorship — that protesters held up.

He was detained at a facility in Shanghai's Baoshan District and charged last Sunday with the catchall "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" offense, the group said. The charge is commonly used against those who criticize the regime or discuss topics considered politically sensitive.

The white paper movement saw anti-government protests span major cities in China in late 2022. The demonstrations were sparked by a fatal fire in Xinjiang's capital Urumqi, in which lockdown rules under China's zero-COVID policy were said to have hampered escape and rescue efforts. Protesters were arrested, although there are no official figures showing the scale of detention.

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Name

Paul Vasilkov
2 months ago

Have you Noticed, the Reports in this "Big Brother News Watch" are ALL about Democrats, Liberals, Progressives, Socialists, Marxists ?
I am Personally Glad to see the "Pendulum swinging back" from Love And Devout To Truth and Honesty...?
The Military have finally come to their senses ,at last with their Mandates on Troops taking Debilitating Gene Therapy Shot(-shots...!
The Big Tech Companies are Censoring Much to Cripple Its Defense Force, and Leave themselves wide open to Enemy Forces...?
As one door opens another one closes...?
Democrats Controlled Big Pharma, Big Food, due to the Collaboration with Big pHarma Funders, are still Imposing Stupid Mandates for Medical Students. (Surgeons)..., but Not their Employees...?
Pity the Supreme Courts (and DOJ) are Blind to their Dual Standards...? A Crime to Die in A Crime Against All.
Time to get Corrupted to the Mighty $...? They have No Consensus, from one State to the Next...?
If you live in a "Blue State" you have No Hope and are Lost to Rationality...?
If you live in a "Red State" there is a Glimmer of Hope...Rob 22 Pt Use tell you !

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